

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA NIACT IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 081544

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: BBAK, HO

SUBJECT: UB PAYMENTS - BLUE RIBBON INVESTIGATING COMMISSION

1. NEWS OF THE APPOINTMENT BY THE GOH OF A BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE ALLEGATIONS OF HIGH-LEVEL PAYOFFS BY UNITED BRANDS WAS CARRIED BY THE WALL STREET JOURNAL TODAY AND WAS CONFIRMED IN A CONVERSATION BETWEEN UB'S GELSTHORPE AND DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS. GELSTHORPE INDICATED UB HAD BEEN ASKED SPECIFICALLY TO DIVULGE THE NAMES OF THOSE HONDURAN OFFICIALS WITH WHOM THEY HAD DEALT. GELSTHORPE EMPHASIZED THAT UB HAD NEVER DEALT WITH CHIEF OF STATE LOPEZ. GELSTHORPE INDICATED THAT UB WILL DIVULGE THE

NAME OF THE OFFICIAL THROUGH WHOM UB DEALT TO THE COMMISSION. HE SPECULATED THAT THE GOH INTENDS TO MAKE THAT OFFICIAL (WHOM WE UNDERSTAND TO BE BENNATON, ALTHOUGH GELSTHORPE DID NOT NAME HIM TODAY) A FALL-GUY.

2. GELSTHORPE ALSO STATED THAT HE HAS BEEN ASKED BY THE COMMISSION TO COME TO HONDURAS AND TESTIFY AND THAT HE IS INCLINED TO DO SO, BUT HE ASKED DEPARTMENT'S OPINION ON THIS. DEPARTMENT OFFICER STATED HIS INITIAL REACTION
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THAT THIS WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA. HE CONTINUED THAT IF, AS

HE UNDERSTOOD TO BE THE CASE, THIS WHOLE TRANSACTION WAS THE WORK OF THE PRIOR MANAGEMENT OF UB WHICH THE PRESENT MANAGEMENT SEEKS TO DISOWN, IT WOULD BE TO THE COMPANY'S ADVANTAGE TO BE AS OPEN AND OUTGOING AS POSSIBLE. HOWEVER, DEPARTMENT OFFICER STATED HE WISHED TO CHECK THIS WITH THE EMBASSY BEFORE GIVING A FINAL REPLY.

3. EMBASSY ADVICE ON PROS AND CONS OF GELSTHORPE APPEARING IN HONDURAS TO GIVE TESTIMONY TO COMMISSION WOULD BE APPRECIATED ASAP. KISSINGER

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